

A Tale of Two (or #EverMore) Festivals: Electronic Music in a Transylvanian Town

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Untold is an annual electro-dance music (EDM) festival in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, attracting 350,000 attendees and well-known DJs and musicians, including: Armin van Buuren, the late Avicii, David Guetta, Afrojack, Tiësto, Jason Derulo, and, lately, The Prodigy, Timie Tempah and Black Eyed Peas. Since 2015, Untold has captured audiences' imaginations with a series of 'chapters' in a 'story' describing a fantasy land populated with characters from Romanian folk tales mixed with fantastic animals that exploit the demon, vampire and magic beast franchises popular worldwide.

Although respected for the international music it promotes, Untold is also unashamedly part of a rebranding, marketing and tourism drive, aiming to promote Transylvania (the northwestern region of Romania where Cluj-Napoca is located) and Romania to tourists, international audiences and musicians. However, Untold's marketing strategies are also tapping into the desire of the Romanian and, particularly, the Transylvanian audience, to feel proud of its own identity and see its own heritage, genuine, appropriated

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or simply invented, projected on a larger international canvass, particularly in the context of the post-communist transition.

This is a complex objective, when in the nearby village of Bonțida, the Electric Castle festival has been thriving since 2013, with a similar emphasis on the Transylvanian multicultural spirit, and the Untold formula has now been replicated in the Neversca festival on the Black Sea Coast, thus raising questions about uniqueness, authenticity and global neoliberal reproduction.

Consequently, the chapter aims to explore the way identity is negotiated by audiences and the festival music, between the international, the national and the regional, how 'natives' become citizens of the world over the four festival days and how 'foreigners' become adopted and temporarily Transylvanian or Romanian. The chapter also investigates the blend of old and new, of history and technology, resulting in a staged event that is inherently universal, but also locally specific, reflecting thus the interplay between received, inherited, adopted and internalized identities at an international music festival.

This chapter adopts a comparative outlook, analyses Untold chapters, posters and YouTube promotional clips, from 2015 to present, and gives voice to both fans and critics of the festival. If witnessing encompasses both seeing and saying (Durham Peters 2001: 709), then it is important to capture what the participants make about the event, their participation giving them the authority to reflect on the transformation of 'experience' into 'discourse' (Durham Peters 2001: 711).

UNITED IN DIVERSITY: NEGOTIATING LOCALITY ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

Untold is the biggest EDM festival in Eastern Europe and the biggest music festival in Romania. It was organized for the first time in 2015, as part of the Cluj European Youth Capital events. The European Youth Capital badge is awarded by the European Youth Forum to 'empower young people, boost youth participation and strengthen European identity' (<https://www.youthforum.org/youthcapital>, accessed 27 September 2018). With the majority of the 350,000 attendees being in their twenties and thirties, the festival fitted the bill perfectly. Like many similar European-led initiatives, the 'united in diversity' motto was adhered to. As a result, Untold was, from the very beginning, meant to showcase an array of musicians from Europe and beyond, while also encouraging local talent and acquainting

visitors with the uniqueness of Cluj-Napoca, the second largest Romanian city, located in the northwestern region of Transylvania.

Its apparently contradictory mission still defines the festival today, creating some contestation over the distribution of international and Romanian musicians, the mix of music genres and the impact on the town. Unlike festivals that start locally and then become internationalised through export (see Ferdinand and Williams 2013), Untold relies on an already successful model of international EDM festivals (Tomorrowland, Mysteryland, Airbeat and Creamfields, to name but a few), which was readily imported and adapted for the Eastern European³, Romanian- and Transylvanian-specific contexts. The formula worked; Untold won the Best Major Festival accolade at the 2015 European Festival awards.

Untold's arrival on the Romanian music scene was partly dictated by external factors and opportunities, such as the 'capital of culture' successful blueprint. Existing academic work gives considerable credit to the role of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) initiative in many cities' regeneration and cultural promotion (Richards and Wilson 2004; Nobili 2005; Griffiths 2006; Herrero et al. 2006; Campbell 2011; O'Callaghan 2012; Cohen 2013; Krüger 2014) and Cluj is no exception. An equally strong internal impetus, motivated by the aim to reconfirm Cluj's role as the symbolic capital of Transylvania and the main cultural competitor to the administrative capital, Bucharest⁴, was also in play. As Richards and Wilson have observed, the establishment of music festivals as a focal point within the annual calendar 'can be linked to a general increase in competition between cities for the attention of important stakeholders, including consumers, investors and policy-makers' (2004: 1931). Capitalizing on Transylvania's historical traditions, established multiculturalism, perceived cosmopolitan attitudes and successful economic development, Untold became one of the main urban music festivals that 'provide concentrated versions of local, regional, national and transnational encounters' (Laloiu 2013: 136).

Like many other festivals, Untold's role was, from its beginnings in 2015, to promote local identities, as well as encourage regional development within a larger global framework (see, among others, Connell and Gibson 2003, 2016; Richards and Wilson 2004; González-Reverte and Miralbell-Izard 2009; Ferdinand and Williams 2013; St John 2015 for similar research), a trend that has led to an unprecedented growth of the 'symbolic economy' (Lash and Urry 1994). Like other European music festivals, Untold also taps into the trend to protect and promote European cultural traditions and identities in the face of globalisation (Cohen 2013;

584). As Sara Cohen reports in relation to Liverpool EOCOC 2008, many European cities mobilise heritage in the staging of music events; Liverpool was among those that had rich popular music memories and traditions to resurrect and drum up (Cohen 2013). By comparison, Cluj has a rather more modest popular musical pedigree, although the Electric Castle festival organized annually by the Bánffy Castle ruins in the vicinity of Cluj, had already been up and running for two years when Untold debuted in 2015, and the city is not short of musical venues and festivals of various genres, especially classical, jazz and folk. As a result, Untold relied less on local specificities and used more stereotypical, mythical and universal tropes, that had the advantage of being immediately recognizable by international audiences and musicians. This adoption was followed by a process of adaptation, through which many of these tropes were imbued with local flavour. Romanian folklore is not short on fairy tales, usually involving some magic realm, and the organizers tried to recreate and populate it with images of typically local animals, especially brown bears and wolves, of which Romania has substantial numbers, as well as woods and mountains, which symbolize Transylvania and the Carpathians. This storyland also becomes a playful realm that comes alive for four days each August. Chapters are added in each successive year, which usually means new characters—human, beasts and anything in between—which are a modernized version of tradition. Thus, Untold can still claim connection to Transylvanian heritage, while also departing from it to become globally relevant. A brief analysis of Untold's chapters, as promoted via posters and annually chosen themes, images and activities, validates the assumption that the universal and the specific meet for ludic and hedonistic purposes, culminating, at least visually, in a massive theme park in the middle of the city.

Headlined by Armin van Buuren, Avicii, David Guetta and brothers Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, the 2015 Untold poster (Fig. 11.1) featured a prince and his horse emerging from a forest at dusk. Horses are a much-loved fixture of Romanian fairy tales and they are usually talking ones or in possession of some other kind of magic power. The figures of the horse and prince are reminiscent of the illustrations produced by Done Stan for the 1972 edition of Petre Ispirescu's 'Basme' (Fairy Tales), the most famous Romanian fairy tale book that many generations have grown up with in Romania due to numerous reprints. Like Stan's illustrations, they are slightly stylised: the long hair, the thick eyebrows, the crown and boots, and thus look like archetypes. Transylvania, as its name recalls, is

ROMANIAN FAIRY TALES TAKE OVER CLUJ-POCA

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UNTOLD

ARMIN VAN BUUREN

ATB DUKE DUMONT FEDDE LEGRAND

ARONCHUPA CAZZETTE LOST FREQUENCIES MICHAEL CAIFAN RADIO KILLER
SUNNERY JAMES & RYAN MARCIANO THIRD PARTY TJJAMO

ADAM BEYER JOHN DIGWEED LEE BURRIDGE

LIVIO & ROBY NIC FANCIGULLI

SASHA SHARAM SATOSHI TOMIIE

ALEXANDRU MIHAI DENISE & MIKA MARIBOU STATE MARWMAN DUA
NU ZAU PARFA FOR CIVA PEDESTRIAN VIRGIL

ANDY C DJ PREMIER

JOHN NEWMAN

PENDULUM MC VERSE

AGUA NARU ALEXANDRINA ARGATU BONDAX CLUB DES BEUGAS CRAZY P
FATMAN SCOOP FOREIGN BEGGARS GOJAN JERU THE DAMAJA MALA MOODS
MOONLIGHT BREAKFAST MR GOJU MR WOODNOTE IL RHYS & EVA LAZARUS
NICKODEMUS NIGHTMARES ON WAX NOPAME ONIRA P MONEY RAKU
SILENT STRIKE SYR SINGER SUBCARPATI SUE PARARUDE THE BUG & FLOW DAN

MANY MORE

GENTLEMAN GRAMATIK

TINIE TEMPAH TOM ODELL

WILKINSON PATRICE

Cluj EOCOC 2015

facebook.com/untoldfestival | untoldfestival.com

Fig. 11.1 Untold 2015 poster

the land beyond the forest; the figures emerge from an ancient forest, with trees thick with age. Yet the forest or the figures are not threatening; they are bathed in yellow sunlight, which becomes the defining colour for the poster, recalling the strong light component of an EDM show. The image was appropriate for an event that was only emerging on the global music stage but wanted to capitalize on the way Transylvania is imagined by primarily Romanian, but also global, audiences.

The characters and colours changed from 2016 onwards, tapping into much darker Gothic and therefore universal imagery. In 2016, the poster featured a night realm, with deep forests and mountains, requiring a special portal for entering. There is an obvious shift here towards neo-Gothicism: the pointed arch, which forms a frame around the portal; the Medieval look of the monk-like wizard; the Capuchin cloak and skeletal jewelled hand; the high mountains and impenetrable forests; the dark blues and blacks of the night, both threatening and alluring. It is obvious that the 2016 visual design is tapping into a more universal design toolbox, belonging to the Gothic and vampire traditions and thus attempting to reinforce Transylvania's appeal in the popular imagination. It also matches the festival's drive to entice international audiences (Fig. 11.2).

The script for the accompanying promotional video could have been written for the promotion of a horror film but used the same symbolic triggers that audiences would have recognized in relation to Transylvania: mountains, dragons, unseen worlds, moon light. Yet these are also universal Gothic fairy tale tropes.

The narrator's voice is heard saying: 'Beyond the golden mountains of Carpathia and through the fallen citadels of the mighty Dacians, far to the north from the dragon nests and deep into the lands of the storm-keepers, a millenary wizard was awakened. Brought to life by the communion of the Untold people and the blessing of the moon, the energy from the unseen world opened the gates to Transylvania. Bringing the ancient magic to our times and turning the great city of Cluj into a place that no one has seen before. And that's how we became the world capital of night and magic. Fulfil the prophecy, be part of 'Untold!' (Untold promotional video clip, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wEV6c3dEXM>, accessed 27 September 2018).

Visually, National Geographic styled shots of mountainous landscapes were interspersed with previous festival footage, live animals and Gothic imagery. The trope of entering a special realm was carried out into their everyday life of the festival. For example, top Romanian designers were

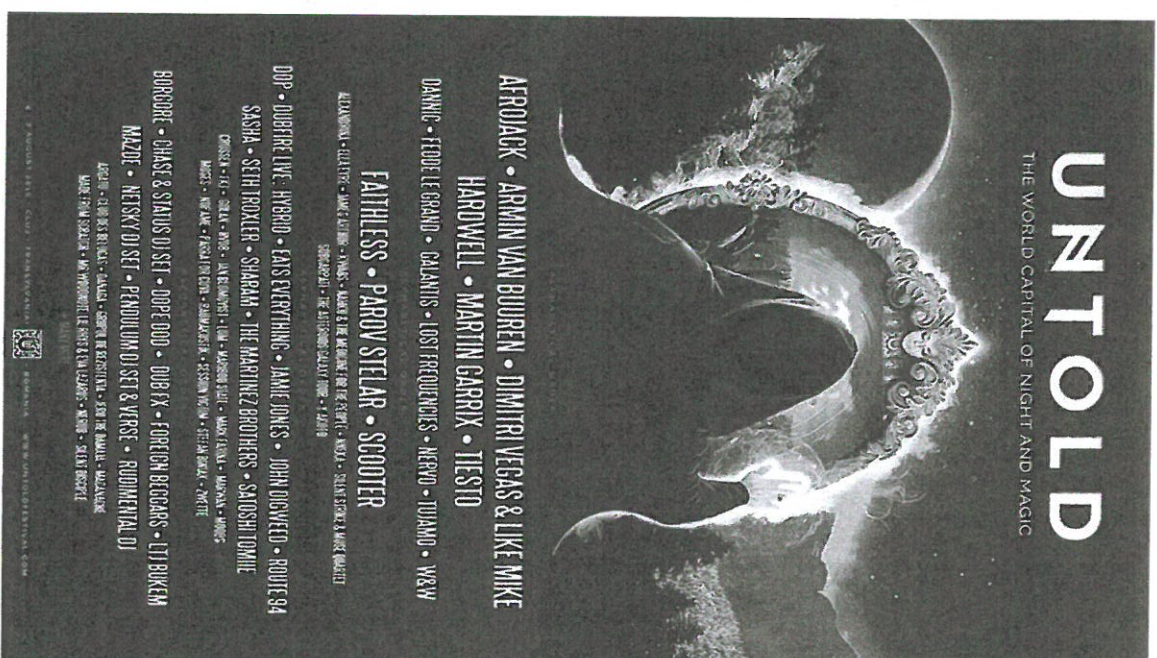


Fig. 11.2 Untold 2016 poster

able to showcase their fashion lines within the festival space and attendees could hire or purchase unique clothes to strut around in the 'kingdom' ruled by 'King' van Bauren, as the DJ is often called by the Romanian press.

The mythical realm theme continued in 2017, when the hooded mysterious wizard in the dark forest returned, accompanied by a magic book and dragon-like creatures. The festival space was then dubbed 'the Dragon's Nest'. In 2018, Untold's fourth chapter ran with the 'Wolf Spirit' caption and hashtag (#WolfSpirit). The 'Realm of Night and Magic', protected by the 'Millenary Magician', returned once more to continue elaborating on the already established themes of good against evil, universal love and magical communion with nature. The fourth chapter also introduced two new characters: The 'Warrior King' (protector of the Realm) and the 'Wise Priestess' (who can predict the future and can stop the evil). These two 'Alpha' characters were connected via a special force that endowed them with the ability to summon the power of their spiritual animal, the wolf, who, together with the Dragon, led a wolf army against anyone who threatened the Realm.

The wolf arrived earlier, in 2016, but did not take a prominent role until 2018. Its visual representation borrowed significantly from the Dacian Draco. The Draco, as represented on Trajan's column in Rome, was the symbol of the ancient inhabitants of Dacia (the territory that is now Romania), who were conquered by the Romans in 106 AD. This war standard blended the head of a wolf with the body of a serpent and is thought to have had religious significance. Although little is preserved from Dacian culture and language (mostly through Roman depictions, such as Trajan's Forum in Rome), Dacianism, the attempt to reimagine and resurrect Dacian culture as a sign of immemorial continuous existence on the same territory, has recently enjoyed a revival, led mainly by conservative nationalists. Its presence at the festival is therefore significant (Fig. 11.3).

The arrival of the wolf allows organizers to delve deeper into Romanian history and connect audiences with primordialism and ancestry. This is a subtle evolution, from the first chapter of the fairy tale, which was more nationally embedded in 2015, to the Gothicism of a more global and universal nature in 2016–2017, with 2018 finally bringing a return to referencing more specific Romanian traditions. Infusing Untold with references that would be more familiar to Romanians is now possible because of the established nature and reputation of the festival, but also motivated by the need to blow the competition (the rurally placed and more

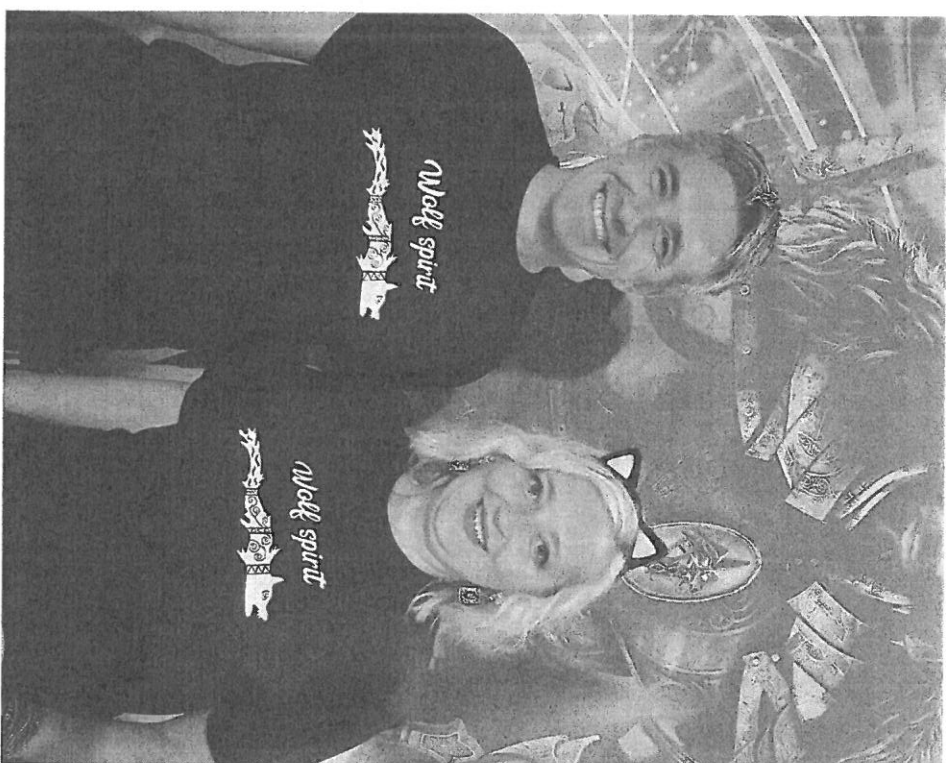


Fig. 11.3 Fans of Untold, Rareș and Mihaela Lupu, with the festival's Dacian Draco T-shirts. The English translation of the surname "Lupu" is "the Wolf". Reproduced with kind permission

musically eclectic Electric Castle festival) out of the water. By deploying Dacian religious symbolism, Untold also referenced the spiritual nature of Goan raves. As a result, both local tradition and universal themes got a nod.

This same trajectory of evolving themes, as a way of projecting identity, is used by advertisers and sponsors. In 2018, Ursus, the brewery that started its life in Cluj to become the biggest beer producer in Romania and has been one of the festival's official sponsors from its inception, designed festival T-shirts using a play on its own logo, the bear. The dancing bear referenced an old tradition at village fairs, the (now viewed as cruel) display of dancing bears by traveller artists, although in its latest incarnation it symbolized mostly having a good time. In the T-shirt reproduced below, the brown bear that populates the Carpathian Mountains is clearly in motion, with the caption spelling 'fur moves', inferring that anyone can dance (like a bear). This image thus captures the EDM festival vibe, typical fauna for the region and the logo of the sponsor, in a clever marketing mix. As Romania has the largest brown bear population in Europe, the bear is also viewed as a symbol of Romania's natural wealth and is, according to the old Ursus slogan 'king of beers'. The crown clearly visible on the bear's own anthropomorphised T-shirt, is reiterating the brewery's slogan, but also creating a symbolic link with the festival's fairy tale theme. The motto Ursus used during the festival was 'What starts with Ursus, ends up epically at Untold'. The brewery's aim was to associate the brand with enhancing the festival experience, through sponsoring certain types of music, building special leisure areas and running various competitions that focused on recycling beer cans responsibly. Both brand and marketing were therefore in sync with the spirit of the festival and both capitalized on traditional representations. Recognizable brands or symbols like Ursus and its bear lend their power to the Untold brand, producing meaning associated with national culture. As Connell and Gibson observe, even previously unknown sites of music-making have become trend setters, not only through the diversity of the music being promoted, but also their 'sophisticate' organization and promotion (Connell and Gibson 2016: 3) (Fig. 11.4).

In 2016, Untold used the association between Transylvania, vampires and blood to launch the 'Pay with Blood' campaign, which raised awareness of the lack of blood donors and encouraged people to donate in exchange for tickets. 2017 saw the return of 'Transylvania All Inclusive', which began in 2016 and gave Untold participants discounts at major tourist attractions in Transylvania. The Untold bracelet, with acts as a ticket and pre-paid device, allowed discounted access to palaces, towers, synagogues, museums,

Fig. 11.4 Ursus sponsored T-shirt, with a modernized version of the brand's logo



the famous Turda salt mine and, of course, Bran Castle of Dracula fame. The same year, Lonely Planet made Transylvania their top world destination.

Although the mythical land Untold projects may not match the stereotypical image of electro-dance raves, the audience experience was nothing but contemporary through a complete digitalization of experience: free wifi, digital maps, specialist apps, pre-loaded pay cards and bracelets, areas for playing the latest video games, special effects and new technology at every turn. In addition, any historical and cultural references were adapted and modified to be read universally. One might not know anything about Dacia and its Draco, but fantastic beasts and fairy tales fit perfectly into the theme park trope that everybody recognizes. Untold had to equally engage local music lovers and international visitors that follow the EDM festival circuit. As a result, the festival had to be international, but also give the locals a sense of pride and identity, and had to be EDM-focused, while also catering to more diverse music tastes.

Eva and Dan, who are Untold fans and were happy to speak with me, initially thought that the festival was organized with a Romanian audience in mind, but as early as its second year, the festival had begun to attract large numbers of foreign tourists and EDM fans. They credited the involvement of local sponsors with facilitating excellent organization and resources. Eva, who is a fashion designer and event organizer, and Dan, who is a music

promoter, were keen to emphasize that what makes the festival unique are the variety of music genres and sub-genres available to audiences, although about 70% of the offering is still reserved to EDM musicians and DJs. However, there is enough diversity in the way stages are organized and acts are booked to make the festival uniquely rich. The talent line-up proves it. For example, in 2016, in addition to DJ stars like Dinitri Vegas & Like Mike, Tiesto, Ummet Ozcan and Afrojack, audiences were able to sample rap, reggae, soul and house, due to the presence of Labrinth, Tanya Stephens, Naughty Boy, Ella Eyre and many others. Romanians, although a minority, were represented by a similarly varied line-up, with Alexandra Subcarpați, Argatu', Macanache and Cedry2k among the guests. The following year, in 2017, no less than 180 artists performed at Untold, providing plenty of choice. Like other EDM international festivals, Untold was defined from the start by the presence of celebrity DJs, following the now typical recipe of instrumentalization of music stars (Robinson 2015: 14) and standardization of line-ups, in an industry that attempts to balance commerce and art (Robinson 2015: 176). There are now a number of Untold regulars, like Armin van Buuren, Afrojack or Dinitri Vegas & Like Mike, with other big acts from outside the traditional EDM scene being regularly booked. There is a greater musical diversity among Romanian guests. Subcarpați credit hip-hop, grime and Trip-Hop among their main influences. Macanache is also hip-hop artist. Alexandrina is a folk composer and lyricist. The eclectic Romanian scene is an attempt to attract a more diverse local audience but is also dictated by the limited availability of Romanian electronic artists, the genre having had a patchy history in Romania. Dance music has come into its own after the fall of communism, but a Romanian version, imbued by folkloric musical themes remains common. Consequently, Romanian dance music remains associated more with pop than electronic music and tends to be less experimental.

However, this eclecticism does not necessarily stand out within the current heterogeneity of EDM. Lalioti observed a similar diversification of the musical repertoire in the case of the Synch festival in Athens, ranging from electro to hip hop. The presence of the Prodigy, the Black Eyed Peas, Elie Goulding, Tom Odell and Timie Tempah at Untold is an indication of the same heterogeneity, multiplicity and open-endedness that Lalioti observed in Athens (Lalioti 2013: 142) and Montano in Sydney (2011: 68). This diversity, which is a feature of the EDM scene, 'gives participants the opportunity to negotiate hybrid local belongings in a global, rather than national, or even European, frame of reference', by allowing the 'deconstruction of

fixed boundaries between styles, genres and spaces' (Lalioti 2013: 146). It is also a sign of mainstreaming and appropriation of EDM, helped by the relocation from clubs into parks and other public places, which also defines Sydney-based EDM festivals (Montano 2011). Most EDM festivals have now evolved from once illegal raves and psytrance events that took Westerners on a spiritual but also more niche quest to Goa and other eastern natural beauty spots (Coutinho 2006: 143), to events where star DJs, the diversification of the musical repertoire, careful staging and branding, as well as increased security arrangements allow events to take place in the middle of cities, attended by young but more diverse and hence bigger audiences. As in the case of Sydney, the motivation for Untold was largely economical and part of a clear cultural economy strategy on the part of the city, so in its first year, Untold was marketed as just a music festival, without much information about guests or music genres. As Marius (23 August 2018), one of my informants told me, he bought the tickets before he knew it was EDM and came to love it when he came to experience it.

Untold is therefore part of a more recent trend in EDM that aims to colonize the city temporarily through mainstreaming and diversification, while maintain a playful appearance. The mundane thus becomes temporarily mythical through the staging and reorganization of place, with the city's monuments lit up long into the night, to match the colourful and bright stage displays. The original symbols and meanings of rave culture might have been lost in this Romanian translation, but Untold has proposed new meanings, based on local cultural content and feeling of place, which resonate at a global level.

PARTICIPATION, WITNESSING AND SOCIAL INTIMACY: EXPERIENCING IDENTITY IN A TRANSYLVANIAN TOWN

Music festivals have benefited from a significant historical economic shift, with an emphasis on pleasure and the nature of experience. As Pine and Gilmore explain, alongside commodities, goods and services, contemporary economies are equally in the business of exchanging experiences and transformations (Pine and Gilmore 2013: 23). They describe experiences as 'memorable events that engage each individual in an inherently personal way' and can become transformative (Pine and Gilmore 2013: 26). Consequently, 'a significant change towards news styles of leisure', such as 'experience seeking, learning, edutainment, or discovery' (González-Reverré and Miralbell-Izard 2009: 53), has come to define the tourism

and, implicitly, the festival industries. Consuming the city (Ritzer 1999) is now part and parcel of the 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The experience is the marketing (Pine and Gilmore 2013: 30), because it is the nature of experience that allows audiences to feel individualized and able to participate, as individuals, in a collective, yet unique and personally transformative experience (see also Pine and Gilmore 2013: 33–34). As Pine and Gilmore observe, 'in a world of experiences – an increasingly unreal world – consumers choose to buy or not buy based on how real they perceive an offering to be. In other words, authenticity has become the new consumer sensibility' (Pine and Gilmore 2013: 29). It is important therefore for festival participants to feel that they can be true to themselves and the festival experience, and for the experience to be perceived as being what it promises to be. However, authenticity is not measured in the amount of local content or number of Romanian musicians, which remains small, but in the ability to witness what other audiences around the world witness, which offers audiences in Cluj a sense of sameness and egalitarianism. Marius, a fan of Untold, who has not missed any of its annual incarnations so far, observed that probably the best thing about the festival is that 'it gives you access to people who compose or mix music and who have been in New York, Ibiza or LA the week before, doing the same thing' (Marius, 23 August 2018).

Marius was born in Cluj and is a visual artist, having now worked in the fashion and design industries in Cluj and Bucharest for the past two decades. He and his wife are both in their mid-forties and keen Untold fans, which they have attended every year together with their now seventeen-year-old daughter. The overall assessment is overwhelmingly positive: the festival is 'safe', 'civilized', with no pushing or throwing up in the streets. There is a downside and that is the ever-increasing price of tickets. Although one hundred Euros for three days may not seem that much, it can cost as much as a holiday if you take several members of your family along and you add the price of food and drinks. Despite the cost, he plans to attend again, due to the witnessing and experiential nature of the live electro-dance performances. The way Marius describes it, it is very much a physical experience, which positively impacts psychological wellbeing: 'it gives you a fantastic feeling, you feel great, everything is great, lots of adrenaline, like a type of drug' (Marius, 23 August 2018). When I asked Eva, another fan, to define the festival in three words, her response was 'experience, explosion, effervescence' (28 September 2018). Both Eva and her husband Dan use the festival as a good occasion to party with friends.

The whole nature of the live performance is based on a similar premise. The live performance is not only perceived as being sensuous and hence desirable, but also more authentic in comparison to other musical experiences (see Holt 2010). In addition, rave and psytrance have long been associated with a heightening of the senses. Drugs aside (because of the family ambience for much of the day, drugs are a peripheral activity at Untold), the futuristic atmosphere produced by the staging of neon and strobe lights induces 'another type of reality' (Coutinho 2006: 147), while also exploiting acoustic parameters that challenge 'the limits of human condition' (Coutinho 2006: 149). As a result, sound pollution at Untold has become a bone of contention within the local Cluj community, to the point that sound levels were lowered in 2018, to the displeasure of participants. However, fans were delighted when more than sound and vision were stimulated at one of American DJ Steve Aoki's typical stunts in 2018, as he threw thirteen large cakes into the crowd. This had a double purpose: one, for the audience members pelted by cake to feel that they had been individualized and therefore given an active participatory role in the performance, and two, for the sensuous nature of EDM to be magnified, by stimulating even more senses.

It would be convenient, but also a tad problematic, to interpret what happens at Untold as participation in a political sense, in the way Turino (2008) or Robinson (2015) use the term 'participation'. The spectacle and presentation or 'showing' of music to audiences, as well as the exhibition of DJs, outweigh true participatory elements, although EDM has always encouraged physical involvement and there are, as in the case of Steve Aoki, new ways in which DJs attempt to establish a physical connection with their participants (although to be cynical, cake throwing could be read as just another self-marketing ploy). Despite such attempts, participants are still spectators, not performers, although elements of co-creation are inherent in what DJs do and in live music performance more generally. Still, as Robinson notices, contemporary festivals offer immersive and playful opportunities, via new types of event design, that lead to content creation (2015: 2). This view is also supported by St John's research into psytrance. As he observes, 'event-goers are encouraged to contribute to and effectively co-create events' (St John 2015: 4).

For audiences, participation in EDM festivals can lead to a religious, as well as a cinematic experience, due to the DJs' performances and the use of sensory technologies. It is for this reason that participation in music festivals of this type can become 'transformational' (St John 2015: 8), true

rites of passage. In addition to the religious, cinematic nature of the experiences St John describes, it is also the nature of witnessing and being part of an audience that witnesses the same thing, that creates social intimacy and transformative participation. Witnessing the extraordinary means risking 'to have your life changed' (Durham Peters 2001: 714). An example of witnessing extraordinary feats is the amount of time spent by DJs on stage, which is often the focus of Romanian press reporting. Armin van Buuren, one of the Untold regular star DJs, was reported to have spent five hours mixing in 2017 and no less than seven in 2018. Coming on stage at 2.00 a.m. and leaving at 9.00 a.m., van Buuren streamed his performance live on his Facebook account and dedicated a song composed by himself to his Cluj fans. At the end of his performance, he descended among the fans, to shake hands and sign autographs. In an interview with *Cosmopolitan* Romania, van Buuren talked about his special connection to Cluj, and the transformative nature of his performances. The DJ became even more famous among Romanians after crying, kneeling in front of his audience and wrapping himself in the Romanian flag at previous festivals. In the interview he described his Untold experiences as 'breath-taking' and professed Cluj and Untold to have become his 'home'. 'Trance is emotion', van Buuren told his interviewer, 'and the fans have been on the same wave length. To share such a moment with people who share your convictions – people from around the world – is both emotional and memorable' (Dragomir 2018a). What van Buuren describes is an exchange that entails a boundary dissolution between DJ and fans, who are concomitantly being transformed by an experience that has a rite of passage quality for both. In this process, personal and collective identities are constantly being renegotiated.

This symbolic communion enhances a type of social intimacy that Romanians, in particular, crave. After being one of the most isolated countries in the communist block with almost no opportunity to interact with foreigners, Romanians relish the kind of experience that Untold provides: the symbolic exchange between them and the musicians, the boundary dissolution between local festival goer and tourist, the democratizing experience of witnessing and being there, in the moment. For four days, Cluj townsfolk become citizens of the world, while foreigners become adopted Romanians and Transylvanians. Untold, like many similar festivals, can achieve a cosmopolitan effect, making people open to different others and new experiences and creating new solidarities (Laloiu 2013).

One of the journalists reporting for the *Cosmopolitan* wrote about the apothecotic end of Untold 2018 thus: 'THE GOD [Armin van Buuren,

capitals in the original] came on stage. Over seven hours of trance. Over seven hours and, by dawn, there were thousands of people witnessing day break together with him. Nothing left to say, we should give him citizenship, he now speaks Romanian!' (Dragomir 2018b). After emphasising the importance of being in the moment as a Romanian, or adopted Romanian, the journalist extolled the cosmopolitan nature of the audience, with many EDM fans travelling from South Africa, China, Cuba or Canada (Dragomir 2018b). Interestingly, in this journalistic perspective, there did not seem to be a mismatch between being a local and foreigner, Romanian and cosmopolitan. To a certain extent this is not unusual for EDM festivals, where 'national identity is performed on site, including by way of national flag displays by individual dancers' (St John 2015: 6), while 'EDM culture lies at the crossroads of local dance event origins and global industry imperatives' (St John 2015: 2).

From Untold's first incarnation, Belgian brothers and regulars Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike got into the habit of waving Romanian flags on stage. In 2018, van Buuren wore a personalised version of the yellow Romanian football shirt. After their first participation in 2018, The Black Eyed Peas declared: 'It's incredible what's going on here! The moment we stepped on the stage, we immediately felt the warmth and positive energy of the fans. When we return to the United States, the United Kingdom and anywhere else we go in the world, we will tell people about Untold Festival and Romania' (<https://cluj-napoca.xyz/news/untold-festival-2018/>, accessed 27 September 2018). These festival discourses of practices show that international musicians make a clear effort to connect with fans at an identity level, instilling a sense of national pride, when fans have the chance to see, at least at a symbolic level, Romanianness being played and referred to on a global stage. In an iconic pose from the festival, Armin Van Buuren is depicted holding the Romanian tricolour flag. It is a typical Christ-like stance, with Armin's hands stretched out on the flag, the head tilted back, the eyes watching the sky. He is offering himself as sacrifice to the Romanian audiences at the end of an epic set lasting more than five hours. Its symbolism is all the more potent, since the tricolour flag is a key and hard-fought symbol of Romanian national identity. These renegotiated and temporary identities, constantly adopted and adapted, are further proof that music has always been defined by the interplay between the fixity and fluidity that characterizes identities (Connell and Gibson 2003: 10) and that music festivals enhance the 'community pride and destination image' of cities (Richards and Wilson 2004: 1932) (Fig. 11.5).

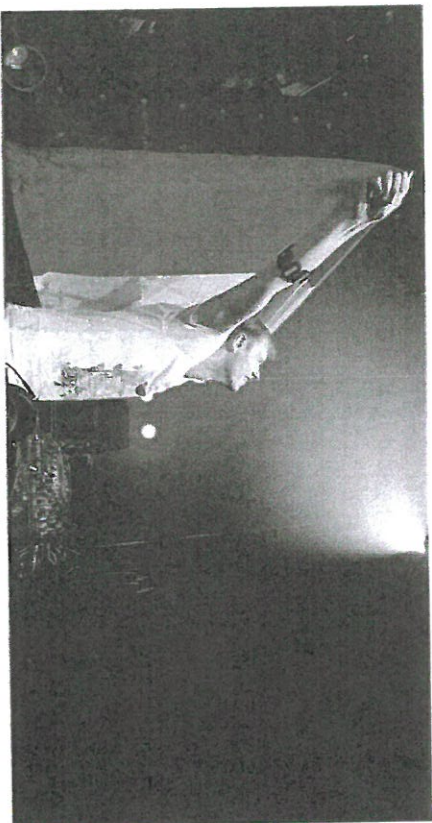


Fig. 11.5 Armin van Buuren brandishing the Romanian flag at Untold 2017

Most fans seem happy with the annual descent of foreign travellers into the city, who colonize the space and temporarily transform Cluj into a cosmopolitan global city. However, as 'major cultural and tourism industry hubs', festivals can also be viewed as contested sites (St John 2015: 3). Roxana (24 August 2018), one of my informants, was very keen to emphasize that, in her view, Untold is 'not specific or multicultural', so it is not Romanian or Transylvanian in its choice of acts, music genres or practices, neither is it inclusive. She deplored that Untold divides the city between those more mature, who are more community minded and worry about sound pollution and the festival's negative effects on residents and those, usually younger, who love the atmosphere the festival creates and its peripheral but fun activities. Roxana could see why fans loved it. Although not unique in terms of musical genres and line-up, Roxana observed that it was unique in that it is organized in the middle of a city, the music and drinking carry on through the night, it offers additional opportunities for those who follow certain DJs around the world to experience them in another setting, and it is safe, in the absence of security threats and hard drugs. However, Roxana criticized the fact that despite the money it raises, Untold does not seem to have a palpable and long-lasting effect on the city or community, unlike Electric Castle, the annual music and arts festival taking place since 2013 on the nearby Băntffy Castle estate, 23 km from Cluj.

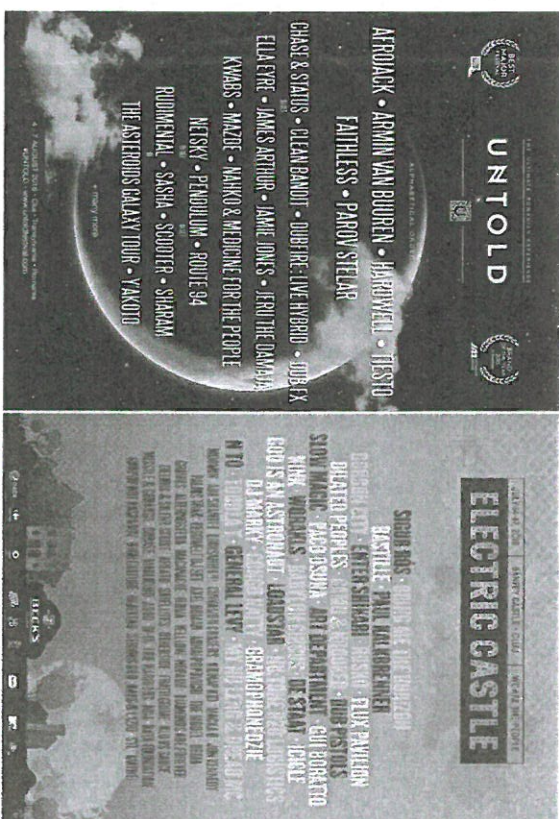


Fig. 11.6 Untold and Electric Castle 2016 posters in comparison

Electric Castle sells itself as specifically eclectic and so in addition to electronic music, it also showcases indie and rock. Visual artists participate with installations, although there is an emphasis on lights and electricity. There are opportunities for local crafts to be displayed, a practice which showcases the cultural richness and the area's specific traditions. Pottery and wood carving workshops also feature. At certain times, political protests have been staged, via clever signage, cartoons and art installations. The emphasis on being smaller and local also connects with one of the festival's main drivers: showcasing local and up and coming talent, rather than relying on mega stars. The below comparison between the 2016 line-ups at Electric Castle and Untold is unambiguous (Fig. 11.6).

To a certain extent, this difference is purposefully constructed. Electric Castle was shortlisted four times for the Best Medium Sized Festival by European Festival Awards, so it is not necessarily small, and it has so far attracted Fat Boy Slim, Franz Ferdinand, Morcheeba, Rudimental, Jesse J. and The Prodigy, among other big names. The visual difference is also obvious and another attempt to brand the festivals as quite different. Untold's

poster emphasises the night aspect of the event that mostly happens under the moon (which takes centre place in the poster) and stars and therefore could happen anywhere when the night falls. It is a universal, less locally specific image. Electric Castle, on the other hand, is a round the clock event, with a variety of activities that happen throughout the day in a continuous cycle. The colour orange exalts the vibrancy of the place when the festival comes to stay. The castle ruins and its rural location, among cottages and oak trees, is clearly referenced in the drawings at the bottom of the poster.

Electric Castle sells itself as more Transylvanian and Romanian and therefore 'authentic', and its line up seems indeed to be populated by more Romanian musicians than one could find at Untold. The difference is also in the prominence that Romanian musicians get. At Untold, Romanians are mainly relegated to the smaller stages and scheduled during the day, not at peak night times, as Roxana, a Cluj resident with a more critical outlook, pointed out. There are few exceptions, such as Tudor Chirilă and Vama, a popular soft rock band in Romania, which played the main stage at Untold in 2017. Despite this marginalization of Romanian music, both fans Eva and Roxana thought that Untold gives Romanians a chance to shine among top foreign guests. It also showcases Romanian hip-hop, in particular, which is a genre with an accelerated development currently in Romania. Eva especially talked about opportunities for new Romanian bands and she, a diehard fan, could not see a perceivable imbalance between Romanians and foreign musicians at Untold.

Electric Castle, on the other hand, has supporting local talent as one of its main missions. In 2017, almost 100 Romanian artists took part, their contributions ranging from techno and dub to alternative rock, post-punk and electro-jazz. Among them, big names locally, such as Suie Paparude, Subcarpați, Goian, Coma, Luna Amară, Robin & The Backstabbers, The Mono Jacks, Macanache & The Putreds. 2018 also saw and heard well known acts Petre Ispirescu, Vunk, Class, Ocs, Histria and the famous Romanian alternative rockers Vița de Vie, together with newer names per-form. Because of its more heterogeneous nature, with genres ranging from hip-hop and alternative rock to indie, electro and reggae, there is more opportunity for Romanians to be part of the festival. The smaller Romanian musical scene seems to inhabit better the smaller festival space.

The size of the Electric Castle festival location, on the edge of Bonjida village, breeds a sense of intimacy, with camping being thrown into the price of the tickets, which at just over seventy Euros for four days, is cheaper than Untold (although prices keep rising). In an evocation of Glastonbury, but at

a much smaller scale, Wellington boots have become a standard emblem and a fashion item. Through camping or hiring rooms in the village, there is a clear connection with nature, land and rural life, in a return to 'authenticity' and (threatened) traditional ways of life. The festival has had a positive economic impact on the area, with many houses being restored with the income that the festival produces. The festival organizers also donate some of the proceeds towards restoring the mainly seventeenth-century Bánffy Castle building, which fell into ruins after World War 2 and was retroceded to the Bánffy family after the fall of communism. Electric Castle therefore sells audiences the promise of a different experience.

What Electric Castle has achieved and Untold may lack, is the community legacy, the more obvious political stances and the feeling of kinship achieved through effective communication strategies, such as mobile light installations that allow people to communicate remotely. However, fans of Untold argue that the money the festival brings to the city of Cluj is one of the most important aspects of the festival, coupled with 'national and international exposure' (Eva and Dan, 28 September 2018), although the financial effect is pervasive and not concentrated.

Untold and Electric Castle play the Transylvanian and Romanian card differently. Because of its location, Untold can aim for size and international exposure. As a result, it has to adopt global clichés of identity from Transylvania's stereotypical arsenal (blood, vampires, forests, mountains, wolves) or adapt local identities for global exposure opportunities. The result is a festival that is not necessarily 'stop watch', because the life of the city carries on regardless, but a festival that takes attendees into a parallel and fun universe, where adults can revert to being children in an immense theme park. Electric Castle, on the other hand, is limited by its location (the village of Bonjida and the Bánffy Castle estate), that dictates its size and the connection with the land. This could be a disadvantage, but in the context of current concerns about reconnecting with the environment, the drive to preserve local crafts, cuisines and natural ingredients, as well as the emphasis on sympathetic historical restoration, it has become a selling point. As a result, local identities are reconstructed in a slightly different way, with more emphasis on authenticity and less concern for global exposure.

CONCLUSIONS

Untold makes a clever play on appearance and reality. In the way it is branded and sold, Untold is indeed unique, as it taps into Gothicism,

fantasy and story-telling, elements that are not typical for EDM music. The experience itself is also uncommon and differentiates Untold from other international EDM festivals: it takes place at the heart of a historic city, not on the outskirts, yet it is allowed to carry on almost non-stop for four days and nights. In many real and practical terms however, this is a typical festival. There is a similar line-up to other EDM festivals like Tomorrowland (Belgium's 'ultimate EDM fest'), and hence the music and experiences are also similar. There is an emphasis on the quality and magnitude of the show, with technology playing an important part. 'Everybody is online, looking at what goes on in Belgium and other countries, trying to copy it here', observed Marius (23 August 2018).

This universal quality has allowed it to breed the Neversea clone. Organized since 2017 on the Black Sea coast, near the city of Constanța, by the same team that produce Untold, Neversea is billed as a fantasy land that includes a magical arc, sea vessels and marine creatures, on a quest to find a secret island (Candea 2017). With its beach location, Neversea has more in common with Goan raves, but the music and artists would be very recognizable to Untold audiences. If one takes into account all the other EDM festivals in Europe and beyond, it seems that a global festival 'scape' (Appadurai 1990) is emerging, made up by a network of festivals that allows fans to party non-stop by moving from one location to the other. Ever more festivals seem therefore likely.

Untold is not free of controversy. The sound pollution and the event's negative effects on many residents who seem unconvinced by presumed financial benefits, the marginalization of Romanian musicians at the expense of star DJs and the standardization of the EDM scene are real issues and a clear consequence of globalization and neo-liberal marketization, but for a previously unknown place and musical setting, hosting a major European festival is a major achievement.

Without a pre-established international image, Cluj has successfully tapped into a number of ready-made symbols, which help the town and the festival become brands in their own right. Relying on what one could describe as cultural clichés, but also very successful franchises, such as magic beasts, vampires and demons, Untold creatives have engaged in a battle over representation and, through it, over authenticity and hybridity, fixity and change. Untold is also attempting to make somewhat outdated clichés, like Transylvanian vampires and other fantastic creatures, modern and relevant to younger audiences. Romanians do not seem worried that much of the stereotypical knowledge about Transylvania is projected onto them by

outsiders and are happy to embrace the myths, making them their own. It is a classic example of invented identity, appropriate for specific purposes, where any imported tropes are internalised, then resold as unique heritage on a global stage.

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